



THE WOMAN  
IN WHITE  
WILKIE COLLINS



EPOCH TWO

**The Story Continued by Marian Halcombe, Part X**

---

June 20th.—Eight o'clock. The sun is shining in a clear sky. I have not been near my bed—I have not once closed my weary wakeful eyes. From the same window at which I looked out into the darkness of last night, I look out now at the bright stillness of the morning.

I count the hours that have passed since I escaped to the shelter of this room by my own sensations—and those hours seem like weeks.

How short a time, and yet how long to ME—since I sank down in the darkness, here, on the floor—drenched to the skin, cramped in every limb, cold to the bones, a useless, helpless, panic-stricken creature.

I hardly know when I roused myself. I hardly know when I groped my way back to the bedroom, and lighted the candle, and searched (with a strange ignorance, at first, of where to look for them) for dry clothes to warm me. The doing of these things is in my mind, but not the time when they were done.

Can I even remember when the chilled, cramped feeling left me, and the throbbing heat came in its place?

Surely it was before the sun rose? Yes, I heard the clock strike three. I remember the time by the sudden brightness and clearness, the feverish strain and excitement of all my faculties which came with it. I remember my resolution to control myself, to wait patiently hour after hour, till the chance offered of removing Laura from this horrible place, without the danger of immediate discovery and pursuit. I remember the persuasion settling itself in my mind that the words those two men had said to each other would furnish us, not only with our justification for leaving the house, but with our weapons of defence against them as well. I recall the impulse that awakened in me to preserve those words in writing, exactly as they were spoken, while the time was my own, and while my memory vividly retained them. All this I remember plainly: there is no confusion in my head yet. The coming in here from the bedroom, with my pen and ink and paper, before sunrise—the sitting down at the widely- opened window to get

all the air I could to cool me—the ceaseless writing, faster and faster, hotter and hotter, driving on more and more wakefully, all through the dreadful interval before the house was astir again—how clearly I recall it, from the beginning by candle-light, to the end on the page before this, in the sunshine of the new day!

Why do I sit here still? Why do I weary my hot eyes and my burning head by writing more? Why not lie down and rest myself, and try to quench the fever that consumes me, in sleep?

I dare not attempt it. A fear beyond all other fears has got possession of me. I am afraid of this heat that parches my skin. I am afraid of the creeping and throbbing that I feel in my head. If I lie down now, how do I know that I may have the sense and the strength to rise again?

Oh, the rain, the rain—the cruel rain that chilled me last night!

Nine o'clock. Was it nine struck, or eight? Nine, surely? I am shivering again—shivering, from head to foot, in the summer air. Have I been sitting here asleep? I don't know what I have been doing.

Oh, my God! am I going to be ill?

Ill, at such a time as this!

My head—I am sadly afraid of my head. I can write, but the lines all run together. I see the words. Laura—I can write Laura, and see I write it. Eight or nine—which was it?

So cold, so cold—oh, that rain last night!—and the strokes of the clock, the strokes I can't count, keep striking in my head——

\* \* \* \* \*

[At this place the entry in the Diary ceases to be legible. The two or three lines which follow contain fragments of words only, mingled with blots and scratches of the pen. The last marks on the paper bear some resemblance to the first two letters (L and A) of the name of Lady Glyde.

On the next page of the Diary, another entry appears. It is in a man's handwriting, large, bold, and firmly regular, and the date is "June the 21st." It contains these lines—]